

# *I Am a Sinner*



## SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11

1 Corinthians 10:31 – 11:1

Mark 1:40-45

### Gathering

*(An unlit candle, a bible open to this week's gospel and an elastic wrap bandage rest on a table covered with a green cloth.)*

As we prepare this week for the upcoming season of Lent, we observe the unexpected encounter Jesus has with a leper. This *unclean*, imperfect man, offers us a glimpse into our own imperfections and how God loves us nonetheless. Last week we looked at the model of Jesus as a contemplative-in-action. How did you incorporate prayerfulness and action in your life this past week?

### Prayer

*(The candle is lit. Members are invited to calm their minds and hearts, taking a moment to acknowledge God's presence. After a time of quiet, a selection of instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, a member leads the group in prayer as follows.)*

Member: Blessed is he whose fault is taken away,  
whose sin is covered.

Blessed the man to whom the LORD imputes not guilt,  
in whose spirit there is no guile.

All: I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me  
with the joy of salvation.

Member: Then I acknowledged my sin to you,  
my guilt I covered not.  
I said, "I confess my faults to the LORD,"  
and you took away the guilt of my sin.

All: I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me  
with the joy of salvation.

Member: Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you just;  
exult, all you upright of heart.

All: I turn to you, Lord, in time of trouble, and you fill me  
with the joy of salvation.

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11

## HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)*

*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: "What draws you to this gospel?" "Where do you resist this gospel?" The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*

## Reflection

*I am a sinner.* It's a line we don't hear too often; it's a topic we like to

avoid. The truth, however, is that we not only make mistakes, at times we sin.

Too often we try to pretend our sins don't exist. We try to hide them from others, from ourselves, even from God, but this really makes no sense. The reality is that it's only through God that the broken, imperfect parts of ourselves can be mended. It's only through God that we can be forgiven and healed.

Jesus cleansed the man who knelt before him, a leper with a terrible physical infirmity that set him outside of Jewish life and society. This was a man to be avoided; he was someone most would have never helped. Jesus, however, showed him mercy, and it's that boundless mercy that God continues to show us, even today. We might not suffer from physical infirmity, but in our brokenness and sin, we suffer a spiritual infirmity that pulls us away from God.

The truly good news is simply this: God wants to heal us. He doesn't want us to sin, but when we do, he is ready to forgive us. Though we're flawed and broken, even though we sin, our God is ready, willing, and happy to reach out and embrace us with true mercy and forgiveness. All we have to do is let him.

*I am a sinner.* These seemingly negative, unflattering words were spoken recently not by a criminal or villain. They were spoken by Pope Francis, a man who has realized that it's through admitting our own flaws that we can be healed. It's through calling out to God for help that we can be restored. Hopefully, we'll open ourselves up to God's loving mercy like Pope Francis has and admit, *I am a sinner too.*

## Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ Who are the *unclean* people in your world today and how do you interact with them?
- ◆ Where in your life can you recognize struggles and brokenness that God has healed in you?
- ◆ When or how can you be more accepting of the flaws of others?

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## HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

*(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?" "How are you/we being called to live in response to God's word?" After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)*

### Response in Action Suggestions

- ♦ Become a volunteer for the "Bandage Brigade" of the D.O.V.E. Fund and knit or crochet leprosy bandages for men and women suffering from leprosy in Vietnam ([http://www.dovefund.org/bandage\\_brigade.htm](http://www.dovefund.org/bandage_brigade.htm)).
- ♦ Experience the incredible mercy and forgiveness of God through the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation this week.
- ♦ Read the essay "On Forgiveness" from The Weight of Glory by C.S. Lewis ([www.oholy.net/stolga/cs\\_lewis.html](http://www.oholy.net/stolga/cs_lewis.html)).

### Prayer

*(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: "What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?" "What do you say to him in response?" The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.*

*Following this sharing, members join in singing, "Shine Jesus Shine." The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, members take turns praying the prayer that follows.)*

### The Leper's Prayer

I: Oh precious Father in heaven,

how great are Your mercies toward us!  
Who are we that you care so much for us?  
Only You care for our life that we ourselves had lost.

- II: You have heard our crying out and reached out to us in  
Your perfect love.  
Oh Savior, our King, praise be the Name above all names  
that walked with us, talked with us, and put His holy  
arms around us!  
You and You alone have made it possible for us to receive  
life.
- III: The payment You made for us is beyond our understanding,  
but we receive it with arms wide open.  
We embrace You and cry out for joy at your compassion.  
Praise be to the Holy Spirit, praise to the Power that heals  
us!
- IV: The hand of the Almighty God,  
He has given us freedom from bondage.  
I offer myself to You as a leper, full of death;  
but You embrace me as a child of Light!
- V: Your mysteries are far above me and I am humbled by  
Your favor.  
Heal me, Lord.  
I know you are willing;  
perfect my willingness to receive your act of love  
as a wonder from the heights of heaven itself.
- VI: Praise God for His goodness,  
and let me shout for joy as a prisoner to death no more.  
For Your name's sake, I will confess Your salvation  
and remember to thank You the rest of my days.  
In the name of the Christ and for His sake.
- All: Amen. And Amen.

Disciple Gideon

[www.disciplegideon.wordpress.com](http://www.disciplegideon.wordpress.com) April 28, 2014

*(The session concludes with members exchanging a sign of peace.)*